

Commissioner Deborah A. Gist's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, December 2, 2011

Note from Commissioner Gist:

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From the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE):

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From the U.S. Department of Education:

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12. U.S. Department of Education announces new measure to safeguard [student privacy](#)

From other state agencies:

13. State Police announce 2012 National [Missing Children's Day](#) Poster Contest

Action Item Calendar

- December 9: [Textbook reimbursement](#) forms due
December 13: Deadline for corrections to Asset Protection Plans (see below)
December 16: [Technology Capacity](#) Survey due
June 30, 2012: Schools and districts submit [final personnel assignments](#)
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Note from Commissioner Gist:

- 1. RIDE plans to advance work on virtual learning, technology, and innovations; conference scheduled for February**

I am very excited to share with you that we are moving forward with our proposal to transform education in Rhode Island through innovative uses of technology.

As you may know, we have applied for a grant is to “revise and create state policy and practice to provide support to our districts...in implementing virtual-learning experiences” and “to support the redesign of a school that uses technology as the catalyst for transformation.” The school receiving this support would serve as a “proof point” site for public education across Rhode Island.

Our hope is to open up a competitive-bid process for proposals from LEAs interested in revising and creating policy at the local level to support digital learning and innovative practices. The LEAs that apply would propose a school site at which they will create a “technology-rich learning environment...that fundamentally rethinks and restructures school, the school day, and teaching and learning” through such initiatives as digital curriculum, gaming, 1:1 computing, virtual-learning environments, expanded learning opportunities, and flexible scheduling. This school would be a pilot program that will help us launch a statewide initiative.

As we await final word on our grant application, we are planning to request proposals early in 2012. On **February 11**, we will hold a statewide conference for all LEAs on virtual learning – please hold this date and plan to join us at this important event.

I will keep you well informed about this initiative as our planning develops. I hope you will be interested in applying for this support and that you will embrace these initiatives that will prepare our students for success in our global society.

From RIDE:

2. RIDE to hold Comprehensive Assessment System webinar on validity and reliability

Please see this notice from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

On Wednesday, December 14, from 9:30 - 10:30 a.m., RIDE will continue the Comprehensive Assessment System webinar series with a webinar on validity and reliability. The presentation will focus on defining validity and reliability, distinguishing valid and invalid inferences from educational assessments, and considering validity and reliability when selecting and developing assessments. To register, please visit:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/assessment/CAS.aspx>

3. Districts reminded to apply for reimbursements for nonpublic-school textbooks by December 9 – Action Item

Please see this notice from our Office of Multiple Pathways:

This notice is to remind you that, under the procedures for reimbursements for textbooks provided to students in nonpublic schools, districts will be reimbursed for only English-language arts and history or social studies books for grades K - 12 appearing on the approved 2011 Textbook List. To receive reimbursements, you must comply with all requests from nonpublic-school students (RIGL 16-23-1 to 16-23-8). For RIDE to process your reimbursement, you must complete the [verification form](#) signed by you or your designee. You also must provide “evidence of cost” (RIGL 16-23-3-1). Evidence of cost is presumed to be clear documentation of district purchases of new books for nonpublic-school students. Please also provide a summary page that demonstrates how

the number of textbooks and the total cost on the verification form were calculated (see sample attached to the verification form).

The verification form must be submitted by Friday, **December 9**. You must return the information to RIDE by mail or fax. The form and supporting documentation should be sent to:

Rosemary Burns
Office of Multiple Pathways
R.I. Department of Education
255 Westminster St.
Providence, R.I. 02903
Fax: 222-4979

A single Fiscal Year 2012 payment will be made in your February 2012 aid payment.

Questions regarding reimbursements should be addressed to Kristen Cole, at 222-4681.

4. RIDE schedules December 13 meeting for superintendents, school-committee chairs, union leaders

Please see this notice from our Race to the Top team:

A location has been selected for the December 13 Race to the Top “Moving Forward Together” meeting. The meeting will be held at the Sheraton Airport Hotel, 1850 Post Rd., Warwick 02886, from 4:30 - 6:30 p.m. All superintendents, school-committee and school-board chairs, local teachers’ union presidents, and charter-school representatives have been invited to attend this meeting. Please remind and encourage the school-committee or school-board chair and the union leader from your LEA to attend with you.

At this meeting, RIDE will present information about the Instructional Management System and Rhode Island’s request for flexibility under NCLB/ESEA. In addition, a panel of educators from across the state will discuss educator-evaluation implementation, and there will be plenty of time for general questions and answers. If you have questions about this meeting, you may contact Nicole Shaffer, at nicole.shaffer@ride.ri.gov.

5. RIDE posts additional information about Teacher-Course-Student data collection, RIDE data-enterprise system

Please see this notice from our Division of Fiscal Integrity and Efficiencies:

RIDE has created a Frequently Asked Questions document about the Teacher-Course-Student (TCS) data collection and the RIDE data-enterprise system, as a follow-up to the

November 22 webinar. This document includes responses to questions from districts related to the TCS data-collection process, Roster Verification, contributing educators, and the RIDE data system and user platforms. We will post the FAQ on our Web site by the close of business today (Friday), at:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/ONIS/webinar_20111122.aspx.

Also, as a reminder, beginning today (Friday), each district should be submitting a weekly status update via the TCS Milestone Tracking module on eRide, which can be accessed at www.eride.ri.gov. This will help RIDE ensure that districts will successfully meet TCS data-collection deadlines.

6. Testing window for eighth-grade 21st Century Skills Assessment to open on Monday

Please see this notice from our Office of Multiple Pathways:

We are excited to be implementing the updated 21st Century Skills Assessment this school year to assess the technology literacy of our eighth-grade students. This updated version of the assessment replaces the TechLiteracy Assessment that we have used for the past three years and will provide a deeper insight into your students' grasp of critical 21st-century skills. You will learn more about your students' creativity, innovation, information fluency, critical thinking, decision-making, and digital citizenship.

More than 50 educators attended the proctor training on Tuesday (November 29) for administering the new 21st Century Skills Assessment and are familiar with the changes in the assessment. The two testing windows have been adjusted, based on feedback from the field. The first window will open on **Monday** (December 5) and will close on December 23, allowing for flexibility in scheduling. The second window has also been extended and will be open April 30 through May 18, 2012. Those unable to attend the training session can register for a webinar to help guide them through preparing for and administering the assessment, at:

<http://www.learning.com/training/>.

Scroll down to the 21st Century Skills Assessment and click on the REGISTER link.

Holly Walsh (holly.walsh@ride.ri.gov) is taking the lead on this project and will be able to answer any questions you may have about the 21st Century Skills Assessment for our eighth-grade students.

7. RIDE shares additional Student Learning Objectives guidance for special-education teachers

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

RIDE has posted a Frequently Asked Questions document on Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) and special education. This document addresses various models special educators may use in setting SLOs, the relationship between IEP goals and SLOs, and the inclusion of functional, organizational, and behavioral skills in SLOs. To access the document, please visit our Web site, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/SLO.aspx>.

8. Last opportunity to register for final Module 3 sessions for Personnel Evaluating Teachers

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

The final sessions for Module 3 for Personnel Evaluating Teachers will take place on **Thursday and Friday** (December 7 and December 8). This training is required for all educators using the Rhode Island Model who are responsible for evaluating teachers.

9. Registration open for training sessions for Building Administrator Evaluators

Module 3 training sessions for Building Administrator Evaluators will be offered between March 6 and April 11, 2012, and Module 4 for Teacher Evaluators will be offered between March 12 and April 25, 2012. Registration for both sessions is open, and RIDE encourages all evaluators to register as soon as possible.

Evaluators can register for all training sessions by going to the eRIDE Workshop calendar, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/applications/ridecalendar.aspx>.

10. Superintendents asked to review, correct Asset Protection Plans – *Action Item*

Please see this notice from our Office of Statewide Efficiencies:

As you may know, we have been working on a feasibility study of all existing public-school buildings within the State of Rhode Island. In June 2010, RIDE asked each district to complete an Asset Protection Plan, as required by the School Construction Regulations. The data provided in these Asset Protection Plans is being used in our *Public Schoolhouse Assessment*.

To ensure the accuracy of the information prior to release of the report, a memo dated October 18, was sent to all business managers, asking them to confirm the information provided in the Asset Protection Plan. We have received updated information from some districts. Because this report will have a wide reach and significant role in future decisions, we are asking you to review the Asset Protection Plans submitted by your district business managers and to notify Joseph da Silva in writing of any corrections to the data no later than **December 13**. You can reach Joe at 222-8030 or at Joseph.daSilva@ride.ri.gov. Taking a few minutes to review this information now will ensure that your district statistics are accurately represented in the report. Thank you for your assistance.

From the U.S. Department of Education:

11. Free summer programs in humanities offered to educators

Please see this notice from the Office of Communications and Outreach:

The National Endowment for the Humanities supports tuition-free summer programs for school and college and university educators. Participants receive stipends to help cover travel and living expenses. These one- to five-week study opportunities are held across the nation and abroad. They focus on major topics, texts, and questions in the humanities; enhance the intellectual vitality and professional development of participants; build a community of inquiry; and promote connections between teaching and research in the humanities. The deadline for applications is March 1, 2012. For more information, go to:

<http://www.neh.gov/projects/summer12.html>.

12. U.S. Department of Education announces new measure to safeguard student privacy

Please see this notice from the Family Compliance Office:

The U.S. Department of Education has released final regulations amending the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA) regulations. You can view an advance copy of the notice at:

http://www.ofr.gov/OFRUpload/OFRData/2011-30683_PI.pdf.

The regulations will be published in the *Federal Register* today (December 2). These regulations are effective January 3, 2012. The Department has issued a press release announcing the publication, which you can view at:

<http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-education-department-announces-new-measures-safeguard-student-privacy>.

Please visit the Department's Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO) Web site (<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpc/>) to view important documents that are being released with the new regulations, including "Guidance for Reasonable Methods and Written Agreements" and updated model notifications for LEA and postsecondary officials. At this Web site, you can also find links to two overview documents about the changes to the regulations: "Revised FERPA Regulations: An Overview for SEAs and LEAs" and "Revised FERPA Regulations: An Overview for Parents and Students."

We hope you will find the preamble discussion in the regulations, as well as the accompanying guidance documents, helpful. Should you have any questions about the issues raised in these final regulations, you may email the FPCO at FERPA@ed.gov.

From other state agencies:

13. State Police announce 2012 National Missing Children's Day Poster Contest

The State Police have announced the 2012 National Missing Children's Day Poster Contest for all 5th-grade pupils in the state. Fifth-graders may enter 8.5" x 14" posters that include the phrase "Bring Our Missing Children Home." Artwork will be judged on creativity, reflection of the contest theme, use of color and materials, and originality. The contest deadline is March 1, 2012. More information about the contest is available at:

<http://mecptraining.org/poster-contest/>

RIDE will send contest materials to all elementary-school principals.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx>